United Nations

Centre against Apartheid

Notes and Documents

No. 8/93 September 1993

MR. MANDELA CALLS FOR AN END TO ECONOMIC SANCTIONS AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA

[Note: This issue contains the statement by Mr. Nelson Mandela, President of the African National Congress of South Africa, at the 669th meeting of the Special Committee against Apartheid held at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 24 September 1993.

Shortly after the statement was issued, Australia, Canada, the Commonwealth, the United States of America, including the City of New York, and the Organization of African Unity moved to lift all economic sanctions against South Africa.]

93-52552

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United Nations, New York XXIII

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We are most grateful to the Special Committee against Apartheid and its distinguished Chairman, His Excellency Professor Ibrahim Gambari, as well as the United Nations as a whole, for enabling us to address this gathering today.

We have, together, walked a very long road. We have travelled together to reach a common destination.

The common designation towards which we have been advancing defines the very reason for the existence of this world Organization.

The goal we have sought to reach is the consummation of the yearning of all humankind for human dignity and human fulfilment. For that reason, we have been outraged and enraged that there could be imposed on any people the criminal system of apartheid.

Each and every one of us have felt our humanity denied by the mere existence of this system. Each and everyone of us have felt brandished as subhuman by the fact that some could treat others as though they were no more than disposable garbage.

In the end, there was nobody of conscience who could stand by and do nothing in the search for an end to the apartheid crime against humanity.

We are here today to convey to you, who are the representatives of the peoples of the world, the profound gratitude of the people of South Africa for your engagement, over the decades, in the common struggle to end the system of apartheid.

We are deeply moved by the fact that, almost from its birth, this Organization has kept on its agenda the vital question of the liquidation of the system of apartheid and White minority rule in our country.

Throughout the many years of struggle, we, as South Africans, have been greatly inspired and strengthened as you took action both severally and collectively, to escalate your offensive against apartheid rule, as the White minority regime itself took new steps in its own offensive further to entrench its illegitimate rule and draw tribute from those it had enslaved.

In particular, we are most grateful for the measures that the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity, the Commonwealth, the Non-Aligned Movement, the European Community and other intergovernmental organizations have taken to isolate apartheid South Africa.

We are deeply appreciative of similar initiatives that individual countries, non-governmental organizations, local communities and even single individuals have taken, as part of their contribution to the common effort to deny the apartheid system all international sustenance.

This global struggle, perhaps without precedent in the inestimable number of people it united around one common issue, has helped decisively to bring us to where we are today.

Finally, the apartheid regime was forced to concede that the system of White minority rule could no longer be sustained. It was forced to accept that it had to enter into negotiations with the genuine representatives of our people to arrive at a solution which, as agreed at the first sitting of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA), would transform South Africa into a united, non-racial and non-sexist country.

This and other agreements have now been translated into a specific programme that will enable our country to take a leap forward from its dark, painful and turbulent past to a glorious future, which our people will strive with all their strength to make a future of democracy, peace, stability and prosperity.

The countdown to democracy in South Africa has begun. The date for the demise of the White minority regime has been determined, agreed and set.

Seven months from now, on 27 April 1994, all the people of South Africa, without discrimination on grounds of gender, race, colour or belief, will join in the historic act of electing a government of their choice.

The legislation has also been passed to create the institutions of State, the statutory organs that will ensure that these elections are held and that they are free and fair.

As a consequence of the creation of these statutory instruments, we have arrived at the point where our country will no longer be governed exclusively by a White minority regime.

The Transitional Executive Council, provided for in this legislation, will mark the first participation ever by the majority of our people at governmental level in the process of determining the destiny of our country.

It will be the historic precursor to the Interim Government of National Unity which will be formed after the democratic elections of 27 April.

The other structures now provided for in law, the Independent Election Commission and the Independent Broadcasting

Authority, will themselves play their specified roles in ensuring a process of transition and a result which our people as a whole will accept as having been legitimate and therefore acceptable.

We must, however, warn that we are not yet out of the woods.

Negotiations are continuing to agree on the interim constitution, according to which the country will be governed as the elected national assembly works on the final constitution.

There will, therefore, be a continuing need for this Organization, and the world movement for a democratic South Africa as a whole, to sustain their focus on the transitional processes, so that everybody concerned in our country is left in no doubt about the continuing determination of the international community to help see us through to democracy.

The reality is that there are various forces within South Africa which do not accept the inevitability of the common outcome which all humanity seeks.

Within our country, these forces, which seek to deny us liberty by resort to brute force, and which have already murdered and maimed people in the tens of thousands, represent a minority of the people.

They derive their strength not from the people, but from the fear, insecurity and destabilization which they seek to impose through a campaign of terrorism conducted by unknown killers whose hallmark is brutality and total disregard for the value of human life.

There are other forces which, because of narrow, sectarian interest, are also opposed to genuine change. These are engaged in other actions which seek to create obstacles on the way to a smooth transition to democracy.

We believe that it is critically important that these forces too should understand that the international community has the will and determination to act in concert with the majority of the people of our country, to ensure that the democratic change which is long overdue is not delayed.

The apartheid system has left a swathe of disaster in its trail. We have an economy that is tottering on the brink of an even deeper depression than the one we are experiencing now.

What this means in practical terms is millions of people who have no food, no jobs and no homes.

The very fabric of society is threatened by a process of disintegration, characterized by high and increasing rates of

violent crime, growth in the numbers of people so brutalized that they will kill for a pittance, and the collapse of all social norms.

In addition, the absence of a legitimate State authority, enjoying the support of the majority of the people, immensely exacerbates this general crisis, emphasizing the critical importance of speedy movement forward to democratic change.

In sum, acting together, we must, at all costs, resist and rebuff any tendency of a slide towards another Somalia or a Bosnia, a development that would have disastrous repercussions extending far beyond the borders of South Africa.

What we have just said is not intended to alarm this august gathering. Rather, it is meant to say: now is the time to take new steps to move us forward to the common victory we have all fought for!

We believe the moment has come when the United Nations and the international community as a whole should take stock of the decisive advances that have been made to create the setting for the victory of the cause of democracy in our country.

We further believe that the moment has come when this same community should lay the basis for halting the slide to a socio-economic disaster in South Africa, as one of the imperatives in ensuring the very success of the democratic transformation itself.

In response to the historic advances towards democracy that have been achieved, further to give added impetus to this process, to strengthen the forces of democratic change and to help create the necessary conditions for stability and social progress, we believe the time has come when the international community should lift all economic sanctions against South Africa.

We therefore extend an earnest appeal to you, the Governments and peoples you represent, to take all necessary measures to end the economic sanctions you imposed, which have brought us to the point where the transition to democracy has now been enshrined in the law of our country.

We further urge that this historic step, marking a turning-point in the history of the relations between South Africa and the rest of the world, should not be viewed as an act of abstention but one of engagement.

Let us all treat this new reality as an opportunity and a challenge to engage with the South African situation in a way that will advance the democratic cause and create the best

possible social and economic conditions for the victory of that cause.

The Special Committee against Apartheid has itself led the process of preparing the United Nations and its specialized agencies for the new reality that is the fruit of our common struggle. We trust that the United Nations family will, therefore, not delay in engaging the people of South Africa in a new way.

We trust also that the Governments across the globe, that have been so central in the effort to defeat the system of apartheid, will do what they can to help us ensure the upliftment of our people.

A similar appeal extends to the millions of people organized in the broad non-governmental anti-apartheid movement themselves to remain involved in the continuing struggle for a democratic South Africa, and to add to their programmes the extension of all-round development assistance from people to people.

We hope that both the South African and the international investor communities will also take this opportunity themselves to help regenerate the South African economy, to their mutual benefit.

As you know, our people have not yet elected a democratic government. It is therefore important that the White minority government, which remains in place in our country, should not be granted recognition and treated as though it were representative of all the people of South Africa.

The Transitional Executive Council provides the appropriate mechanism for such interaction as should take place between ourselves and the international community in the period between now and the formation of the new government.

We should mention here that, within the ambit of the diplomatic sanctions which many countries imposed, we also believe that such countries may now establish a diplomatic presence in South Africa to enhance their capacity to assist the people of our country in realizing the common objectives.

This Organization also imposed special sanctions relating to arms, nuclear matters and oil. In this regard, we would like to urge that the mandatory sanctions be maintained until the new government has been formed. We would leave the issue of the oil embargo to the discretion of the Committee of the General Assembly responsible for the enforcement of this particular sanction.

We would further like to request the Security Council to begin consideration of the very important issue of what this Organization should do to assist in the process of organizing for the forthcoming elections and ensuring that they are indeed free and fair.

This, naturally, should be accompanied by a review of the important contribution that has been made by the United Nations Observer Mission in South Africa, which is helping us to address the issue of political violence, to ensure that this contribution addresses this continuing problem adequately.

We cannot close without extending our congratulations to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Government of Israel for the important step forward they have taken which, hopefully, will lead to a just and lasting settlement of the Middle East question.

To them, and to the peoples and Governments of the region as a whole, we extend the good wishes of all the people of our country and the assurance of our support for their noble effort to establish justice and peace.

We continue to hope that progress will be made towards the just resolution of the outstanding issue of Western Sahara.

Angola continues to bleed. We urge this Organization, and especially the Security Council, to leave no stone unturned to ensure that the killing ends and the democratic process is respected.

We are encouraged by the steps that have been taken to bring peace to Mozambique, and trust that no new obstacles will emerge to deny the people of this sister country the peace, stability and prosperity which they have been denied for so long.

Our common victory against the only system to be declared a crime against humanity since the defeat of Nazism is in sight.

The historic need to end this crime as speedily and peacefully as possible requires that we, the peoples of the world, should remain as united as we have been and as committed as we have been to the cause of democracy, peace, human dignity and prosperity for all the people of South Africa.

Standing among you today, we continue to be moved by the selfless solidarity you have extended to our people. We are aware that by our common actions we have sought not only the liberation of the people of South Africa but also the extension of the frontiers of democracy, non-racism, non-sexism and human solidarity throughout the world.

Understanding that, we undertake before you all that we will not rest until the noble cause which units us all emerges triumphant and a new South Africa fully rejoins the rest of the international community as a country of which we can all be proud.